



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

MINUTES

Family and People Services Policy & Scrutiny Committee

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of a meeting of the **Family and People Services Policy & Scrutiny Committee** held on **Thursday 25 November 2019** in Rooms 18.01 and 18.02, 18th Floor, 64 Victoria Street, London SW1E 6QP.

Members Present: Councillors Jonathan Glanz (Chairman), Margot Bright, Nafsika Butler-Thalassis, Peter Freeman, Patricia McAllister, Selina Short and Azizi Toki

Also present: Councillor Heather Acton.

1. MEMBERSHIP

- 1.1 It was noted that Cllr Toki had replaced Cllr Carman as a member of the Committee. The Committee expressed its thanks to Cllr Carman for her valuable contributions to its work and provided a welcome to Cllr Toki.
- 1.2 Apologies were received from Cllr Emily Payne.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

- 3.1 That the Minutes of the Family and People Services Policy and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 17 October 2019 be approved.

4. CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

- 4.1 Councillor Heather Acton (Cabinet Member for Family Services and Public Health), provided a briefing on key issues within her portfolio. The Committee

also heard from Bernie Flaherty (Executive Director, Adult Social Care and Health), Sarah Newman (Interim Executive Director of Children's Services), Senel Arkut (Head of Health Partnerships and Development), Houda Al-Sharifi (Interim Director of Public Health), Nicky Crouch (Interim Director of Family Services), Michelle Hill (Special Programmes Director) and Dominic Stanton (Acting Director of Adult Social Care).

4.2 The Committee received the update and held detailed discussions on the following topics:

- Meals on Wheels – It was confirmed that following the end of the Sodexo provided Meals on Wheels service a significant amount of work had been undertaken to ensure service users' needs had been reviewed with new care plans or alternative arrangements put in place. All service users affected had been contacted after the end of the previous service to ensure that their needs were being met. The Committee discussed the costs to the users of the new arrangements. The Committee were pleased that there had been no complaints since the service ended. It was confirmed that there would be a review three-months post cessation of services.
- Adapted Housing – The Committee was interested to learn of the interaction between services with regard to ensuring older people and those with physical disabilities were provided with suitable adapted housing. It was noted that there was a high level of interaction between all the relevant services including Housing and Adult Social Care. Efforts were being made however to develop an even more cohesive relationship between all parties to further enhance the offer to service users.
- Residential Care Homes – Garside House Nursing Home (a service provided by Sanctuary Care Ltd) was currently the subject of a Police investigation and the home had been inspected subsequently by the Care Quality Commission (CQC). Once the findings were publicly available these would be shared with the Committee. Beachcroft House was linked to the current SHSOP project contract and it was likely there may be an impact on its planned opening of Summer 2020.
- Oral Health – The Committee was pleased to note a campaign was underway, using Change4Life branding, which was aiming to communicate to residents that children under the age of 18 could get free dental treatment. It was commented that community notice boards located throughout the borough could be utilised to further disseminate the message. In addition, it was suggested that work be undertaken with the Community Champions to ensure a consistent message was communicated to residents. It was also noted that dental care was free during pregnancy and for 12 months after a baby was born.

- Sexual Health – On 1 April 2019 the Committee had received a report detailing the sexual health services provided within Westminster. The Committee had been particularly interested to learn about a trial underway using a medication called PrEP which helped prevent people from developing HIV. It was confirmed that the Council was continuing to support the trial and an update on its progress would be provided to the Committee.

5. WESTMINSTER'S YOUTH JUSTICE, STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP PLAN 2019-2022 – A PATHWAY TO POSITIVE CHOICES

- 5.1 Jayne Vertkin (Head of Early Help) introduced the report which outlined Westminster's Youth Strategic Partnership Plan for 2019-22. The Committee also invited Sarah Newman (Interim Executive Director of Children's Services) and Nicky Crouch (Interim Director of Family Services) to join the discussion on this item.
- 5.2 The Committee was interested to note the report which covered a 3-year period and detailed the work undertaken to develop localised responses in assisting children and young people maximise their outcomes. An overview was also provided of the work of the Youth Offending Team (YOT) which was a multi-agency team which sat within Family Services and worked closely with the full spectrum of Children's Services from early intervention through to more specialist services.
- 5.3 The Committee was informed that the number of young people aged 10—17 entering the Youth Justice System for the first time had reduced between October 2017 and September 2018 from the same period the previous year. However, the complexity, nature of the offences and rates of reoffending of the remaining cohort remained a challenge. Difficulties had been experienced in reaching and engaging with this cohort, 50% of which were not in education, employment or training. As a result, the YOT would be carrying out a targeted piece of work, following a scoping exercise, to look at the young people that had reoffended and determine any missed opportunities.
- 5.4 In response to questions from the Committee it was explained that the strategy was underpinned by a relational and trauma informed approach. This would focus on understanding the reasons for the behaviour, rather than just the result of the behaviour, and support young people to make and sustain change. This whole system approach to youth justice targeted early interventions, placed the children first and engaged them in activities to prevent them entering the Youth Justice System. This included significant school inclusion work being undertaken targeting those children of Primary School age identified as at risk of exclusion. The Committee was pleased to note that the number of young people entering the justice system in Westminster had reduced 3 years in a row which suggested that the early intervention strategy was proving effective. It was explained that as

part of this work an Early Help Strategy had recently been developed and this could be circulated to the Committee

- 5.5 A discussion was held over engagement work carried out with different communities, in particular the Kurdish community. It was confirmed that currently there was not a specific charity relating to the Kurdish community however engagement work with it was being commenced. This was being undertaken through Youth Hubs, partnership working with the Police and the introduction of a new Community Engagement Officer to begin to identify the main concerns of this specific community and explore options to address these concerns. The Committee welcomed this development and requested an update be provided at the next meeting on progress in engaging with the Westminster Kurdish community.
- 5.6 The issue over young people classified as 'Not in Education, Employment or Training' (NEETs) was highlighted by the Committee who was interested to learn what efforts were being made to engage them. It was confirmed that a NEET Panel had been established to identify and address concerns regarding this issue. Their work involved significant crossover with the Integrated Gangs Unit (IGXU). The Committee noted that 75% of young people referred to the service were continuing to engage with it and 62% had subsequently returned to employment or educational training. Information on the work of the IGU was provided including the workshops it delivered to schools. The Committee expressed interest in the workshops and requested that the possibility of attending a future event be explored.
- 5.7 The Committee stressed the importance of coordination between the various stakeholders and Council services, in particular the education and employment services, in order to ensure there was integrated working which provided appropriate support and opportunities for young people who had needs which were impacting on their life choices. The Committee expressed its thanks to the Officers for all their hard work in this area and on the positive progress being made.

6. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVERS REPORT: INDEPENDENT REVIEWING SERVICE

- 6.1 Angela Flahive (Head of Safeguarding, Review and Quality Assurance) introduced the report which provided quantitative and qualitative evidence relating to Westminster City Council services for Looked After Children in 2019/19, as required by statutory guidance. The Committee also invited Sarah Newman (Interim Executive Director of Children's Services) and Nicky Crouch (Interim Director of Family Services) to join the discussion on this item.

- 6.2 The Committee noted that as of 31 March 2019, 209 children and young people were Looked After by Westminster City Council. Whilst the total number remained static the composition of the care population within Westminster was changing. The number of children coming into care from the generic population of children under 13 years of age was reducing and the numbers of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children arriving in Westminster was increasing. This was creating numerous complex safeguarding issues. It was highlighted that 490 Looked After Children Reviews had been undertaken in 2018/19 with 96% of children over 4 years of age contributing to their statutory review. The Committee welcomed that the voice of the child/young person was key to all discussions and care planning arrangements. It was advised that the introduction of minutes for review meetings in the form of a letter to children was being valued by both children and professionals. It helped to ensure that the child/young person was kept at the centre of the reviewing process, that the minutes were personal, that the language was clear and that the plan was purposeful. It was confirmed that an anonymised example of the minutes could be circulated to the Committee.
- 6.3 In response to questions from the Committee it was explained that in 2018/19 the majority of children aged 14 plus coming into care were placed in supported lodgings. This reflected the high number of unaccompanied minors coming into Westminster who were primarily aged 16 to 17 years old. Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) accounted for 73% of adolescent care entrants. Care planning and reviewing for children originating from other countries brought additional levels of complexity in relation to issues such as establishing jurisdiction, use of interpreters and cultural needs, all of which required additional time to ensure effective care planning. The increase in the number of UASC since 2016/17 had greatly impacted upon the Council's overall current LAC and Care Leaver populations. It had led to an increase in caseloads which had resulted in several challenges for the Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) in undertaking the wide range of quality assurance activity. Planning to address these challenges was currently taking place and this included introducing enhanced working with UASC and additional IRO capacity into 2020. The Committee welcomed an invitation to attend a site visit to the supported housing provision for older children.
- 6.4 The Committee was provided with an update on the fostering service. It was explained that there was a wide selection of carers who were profiled, along with the children, to ensure there were suitable matches. It was recognised that challenges remained in instances when children required emergency placements. All efforts were made however to match children ethnically and religiously taking into account the child's wishes and feelings.
- 6.5 Further information was provided on the detailed safeguarding work undertaken with those children and young people who were identified to be most vulnerable. Assistance was provided to carers around planning and keeping children safe as

well as to the young person themselves. Each child would have a personalised safety plan, so if the child was deemed to be vulnerable to exploitation they would know where they could go to seek assistance and support.

- 6.6 The Committee expressed its thanks to the officers for an excellent report and all their hard work in a very challenging and complex area. The Committee expressed its willingness to engage further with the Looked After Children Service and suggested it be informed of any potential areas where it could observe some of the valuable work being undertaken.

7. 2019/20 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKER

- 7.1 Lizzie Barrett (Policy and Scrutiny Officer) presented the Committee's 2019/20 Work Programme and Action Tracker.
- 7.2 The Committee reviewed the draft list of suggested items and were provided with a brief update on the task group established to focus on Young People's Mental Health and Technology.
- 7.3 The Committee noted the action tracker and requested minor alterations to the designations on the recommendation tracker.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Work Programme be noted;
- 2) That the action be noted; and
- 3) That the recommendation tracker be noted.

8. REPORTS OF ANY URGENT SAFEGUARDING ISSUES

- 8.1 The Committee received an update from Nicky Crouch (Interim Director of Family Services) with regards to the timescales of a recent recommendation for a Child Safeguarding Practice Review following a serious incident which had occurred in Westminster. The Committee welcomed a suggestion that an example of a review be circulated for information.

The Meeting ended at 8:42pm.

CHAIRMAN: _____

DATE: _____